



CHANGES IN THE ROUTE TO QUALIFICATION

Over the last three years, legal education and training in Scotland has undergone a major review. This paper summarises the plans to change the way solicitors are educated, and trained in Scotland. For more comprehensive information on the policy of education and training visit the Society's website.

www.lawscot.co.uk/training/consult

This new framework for legal education and training for the future (i) will produce newly qualified solicitors who are educated and trained to the highest possible standard; (ii) can be delivered by the academic and training communities, and (iii) is suitable for Scotland and the Scottish legal services market.

In order to fully understand the changes being made to the route to qualification in Scotland, the current routes to qualification and options are explained here the changes resulting from the major review of legal education and training are outlined below and will be implemented from 2011. Keep checking the sources quoted for up-to-date information.

Studying Scots law

The present position

Scots law (the LLB) can be studied as a first degree in 10 higher education institutions in Scotland. This can take two, three or, more commonly four years. The single honours law degree, which is taken by the majority of students, takes four years. The ordinary degree takes three, and the accelerated ordinary degree, for those with a first degree in another discipline, takes two. Presently, in order to become a solicitor in Scotland *the professional subjects* are required to have been studied during the LLB, during years 1, 2 and perhaps 3. These *professional subjects*, and the marks achieved in the subjects determine entry to the Diploma in Legal Practice.

An alternative route to qualification exists, in which the LLB is not required. This involves entering into a three year pre-diploma training contract with a Scottish solicitor and studying for the Society's professional exams.

Changes from 2011

The LLB will be replaced with a new 'Foundation Programme' which will be offered at the same level as the present degree programme, with the benefit of more flexibility in the programme to both deliver subjects required for entry to the solicitors' profession, and deliver other courses. Learning outcomes for the Foundation Programme will be developed.

The current entry selection criteria (performance in the *professional subjects*) and process for entry onto the PEAT 1 (replacing the Diploma in Legal Practice) will be reviewed **this is key for anyone applying for PEAT 1 from 2011, as transitional measures will be required. Keep in touch with the Society between now and then if this affects you.**

It should be noted that the alternative route into the profession (professional exams and three year pre-diploma training contract) was reviewed and there is a commitment to retain it until a replacement is established. It is likely that within the next few years details will emerge on how this route is to be phased out, with other flexible options for qualifying being phased in.

The Diploma in Legal Practice

The present position

The next stage of the process is currently the Diploma in Legal Practice. This 26 week course can be taken at six institutions in Scotland (seven from 2010) and is designed to teach the practical knowledge and skills necessary for the working life of a solicitor. The Diploma is normally a full time course, with just one institution providing a part-time option from 2009/10 for the first time.

Changes from 2011

From 2011 the Diploma will be replaced by PEAT 1; that is Professional Education and Training Stage 1, incorporating a Diploma with increased choice and flexibility around electives. PEAT 1 will comprise a core and electives, with the core having a required minimum content determined by the Society and the proportion of core and elective otherwise to be determined by each provider for its particular course. Once again, learning outcomes will be adopted and developed for PEAT 1. The new accreditation guidelines will allow for part-time delivery of PEAT 1, should a provider wish to run a part-time option.

Traineeship

The present position

The final stage in the route to qualification is the traineeship, a two year training contract with a practicing solicitor in Scotland. There is ongoing assessment throughout the traineeship. This consists of maintaining log books and submitting quarterly performance reviews ('QPRs') to the Society. The log books and reviews are used by both the training firm and the Society to monitor progress and help deal with / identify any problems.

Between the sixth and 18th month of the traineeship, trainees attend a skills based course called the Professional Competence Course (PCC). Currently this consists of 36 hours of core and 18 hours of elective modules. It involves more in depth coverage of subjects such as professional ethics and legal practice and it aims to consolidate and build on what is learned in the traineeship.

Changes from 2011

From 2011 the traineeship will become 'Professional Education and Training Stage 2', which will follow on from PEAT 1. Outcomes to be met at the end of PEAT 2 will build on outcomes achieved in PEAT 1, there will be improved methods of recording achievements and performance through enhanced QPRs and e-portfolios, and there will also be increased guidance for the training organisation. Trainees will be required to undertake 60 hours of accredited Trainee CPD during PEAT 2, which will replace the existing Professional Competence Course. This will allow for further flexibility and increased choice.

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